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ACCOUNT OF THE LOSS OF THE RANDOLPH
AS GIVEN IN A LETTER FROM RAW-
LINS LOWNDES TO HENRY
LAURENS.

(From the Laurens Papers.)

D^r Sir

As this Man has been so kind of his own accord to call upon me to know if I had any letter for York, being to set off early to morrow morning express from Mr Livingston— I take the liberty to Inclose you a printed Copy of our Constitution, this instant from the Press.

The melancholy news of the loss of the Randolph, has reached us by the prize Master of a small Schooner from New York which was captured by poor Biddle he was witness to the dreadful scene when the Randolph Blew up in the Engagement, which a Letter from Capt Wm Hall in a Brig in the service of our State and under the Command of the Randolph thus described “Lat 17° 54’ n” Long 55° 18 W 8th March made Sail to Windward bearing E. N. E. 9 Leagues, gave Chace at 5 she proved to be very large, she bore down to us and at 7 p. m. fired a Gun to bring us to and then haled the Moultrie who answered them, I being under the Moultrie’s lee quarter the Randolph upon the Moultries Weather Bow, the Polly to Windward of the two, and the Fair American to Leeward of me—the Enemy shot by the Moultrie and continued towards the Randolph, the Randolph hove out no Signal for hauling in a Line of Battle, but laid her Mosen Top Sail to the Mast and got in readiness for engagement.—the General Moultrie being to Windward of me I could not get to Windward to get up in the Randolphs wake, with that I laid my Main top sail to the mast for the General Moultrie to shoot ahead, we

being then with our Starboard tack on board, by this time the Enemy got so near the Randolph as to hail her, with that the Randolph luffed up in the Wind and brought her Quarter & Quarter deck Guns to bear upon the Enemy and discharged them—with that I immediately gave the Enemy a broadside, the Enemy took the advantage of the Randolph & Shot up to windward of her and gave her a broadside and so continued for 12 minutes the General Moultrie to the Southward to get clear of her—Enemy began to engage when I exchanged the broadside at her; by this time the Randolph Blew up, and I thought it was best for me to make the best of my way clear of her, as soon as the Randolph blew up she immediately gave chase to the General Moultrie and myself as I stood away to the Westward, & the General Moultrie to the Southward to get clear of her—I found before she engaged that she had a flag hoisted at her fore topmast head & a high poop which I take to be a 40 or 50 Gun Ship—the Randolph disabled the Enemy much she shot away the mosen top Mast and Boltsprit—I could not Sir help giving you the particulars of this really distressing and affecting affair as the Letter lies on my desk before me from whence I have extracted the article— 50 of the best men in the first Regiment were on board of her and Several very promising Youths of this Country who have thus immaturely fallen in their Country's Service the four Vessels in Company with the Randolph above alluded to, were those fitted out by this Country and put under the Sole direction of Biddle for the Express purpose of clearing our Coast, which has been for several Months annoyed by one, two and sometimes 3 Vessels— his taking so large a circuit was incompatible in my opinion with his destination, and the Views of Govern^t. and has left us now without any Recourse from the Evil, which we every day feel the effects of.

Had I known of this Opportunity sooner, I should have transmitted to you an Acct. which our Comm^{ee}

have made out against the Continent to a large amount—The advance on this head, and the great and increasing charges of our State keep the Treasury so bare of Cash, that all schemes of Supply scarcely answer the daily demands. By the Tax Bill just passed 500.000 dollars are to be raised in Consequence of the Requisition from Congress—by a tax of £5 on Lands and Slaves payable next June—

About three days ago a Flag of Truce was despatched to St Augustine with 45 prisoners of war, to exchange as many of our unfortunate people as we can procure for them.

I wish some means could be devised to obtain the enlargem^t of Pickering and his Men who Suffer rigorously at New York—I saw a Letter lately from one of his Officers complaining in very affecting terms of their treatment

You will Excuse this hasty indigested Epistle by Candle light which I meant only to cover you the Constitution.

I am with Respect

Sir y^r Most Obed^t hum Serv^t

Raw^l Lowndes

30 March 1778
Charles Town.